

Voices.com

2021 Annual

Trends Report



Table of Contents

Intro	3
The Top 4 Trends for Creative Industries	4
The Future of Work is Remote and Freelance	6
Increased Demand for eLearning and Training Content	8
Adoption of a More Flexible Content Strategy, With an Increase in Internet Videos	10
The Acceleration of Digital Solutions in a Voice-First World	13
Looking Ahead	15
Methodology and About Voices.com	16

Intro

Every year, Voices.com looks at creative services industries to see if there were any overarching trends to report on or any predictions we'd like to make for the next year. We've reported on the rise and fall of different types of projects, who brand advertisers are targeting, and the closing of the gender pay gap in voice over work. This year, the data looks a little bit different.

Consumer behavior, marketing strategies, advertising spend, and even the reliance on your company's office has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital transformation across industries is taking place at a rapid pace, changing the landscape for creative services.

We leveraged internal data and surveyed over 1,000 of our clients, in industries ranging from advertising, education, media, entertainment, technology, and more, to uncover trends that emerged in 2020 and to explore the trends that will stick around for 2021.

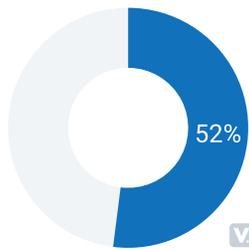
This report contains:

- The four biggest trends impacting creative services industries right now
- Insights into how 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic shaped the future of work and accelerated change in digital transformation, content strategies, and the rise in voice technologies
- Our top four predictions for 2021

The Top 4 Trends for Creative Industries

Four trends emerged as the top trends impacting our survey respondents' work or their industries. We asked respondents to rank trends by popularity, meaning they could choose more than one trend from a list that impacted them.

The graphs below show the percentage of survey respondents whose work or industries were impacted by each trend in 2020.

**01**

A Shift to Remote Work

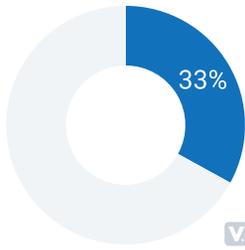
"COVID-19 has impacted collaboration among team members and interrupted our processes. We've had to shift everything online as we worked from home."

"Everyone, everything is remote and virtual now."

"It has made a lot of industry people realize that working remotely is viable and can produce the same level of quality with much less expenses for traveling."

"My business has gone from 45% in-person meetings to 100% out of office meetings all online. Our company has moved everything online."

"We are all permanently working from home which is a stark contrast from a previously highly collaborative office environment."

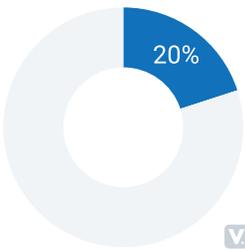


02 An Increased Demand for eLearning Content and Online Training

"[There is an] increased need for instructional designers and educational media."

"[There is] more work for me as an eLearning instructional designer."

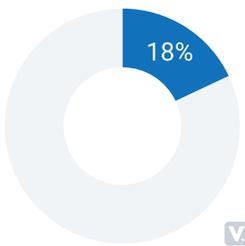
"COVID-19 has made the business more home based. We have diversified our area of service provision in order to earn more. Since schools were closed we decided to expand our range of products other than dealing with schools only."



03 The Growing Digital Audio Advertising Space

"Several of our clients have doubled down on social media advertising as it's the quickest way to have one-on-one conversations with consumers."

"An increasing trend of brands moving towards more audio-visual assets for advertising, explaining, and training."



04 Increased Popularity of Voice-Powered Applications and Devices

"Since the world is moving to more ecommerce and optimized systems, I think voice technology has significant importance in creating and protecting human connections."

*"Voice is feeling more and more like an expected, standard feature. It will not be long before voice is an essential part of *ALL* interactive work."*

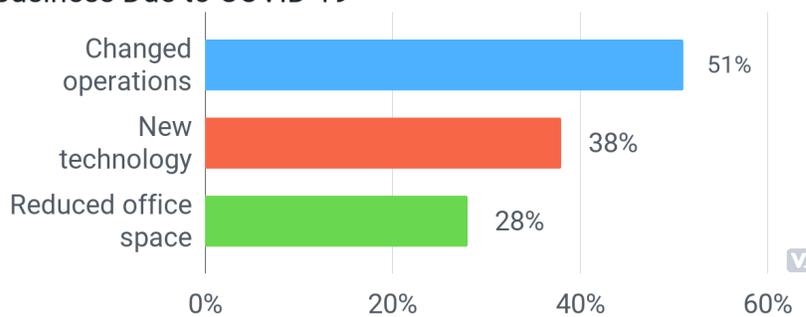
01

The Future of Work is Remote and Freelance

We all know that the future is impossible to predict, but we're fairly certain that when we look back at this year we'll see that it was *the* year that the business of work changed. The COVID-19 pandemic and the layoffs, business closures, work from home orders, and general disruption it caused forced businesses to honestly—and quickly—assess their operations to determine what was and wasn't working for them.

We asked survey respondents to tell us what changes they've made in their own businesses in the wake of COVID-19.

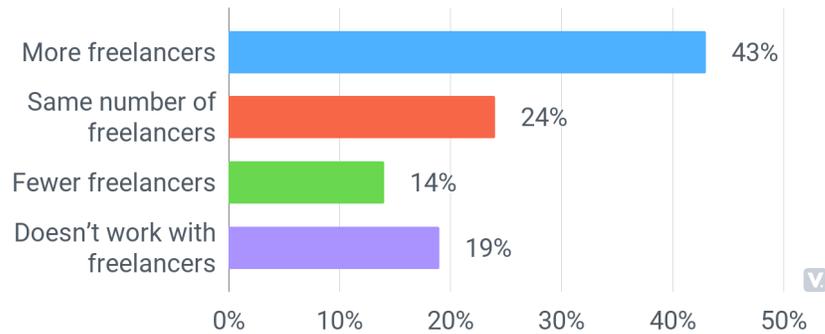
The Top Three Changes Respondents Made in their Business Due to COVID-19



Beyond daily operations, we also asked survey respondents about their work with freelancers. We wanted to know if their work with freelancers was growing, staying the same, or decreasing.



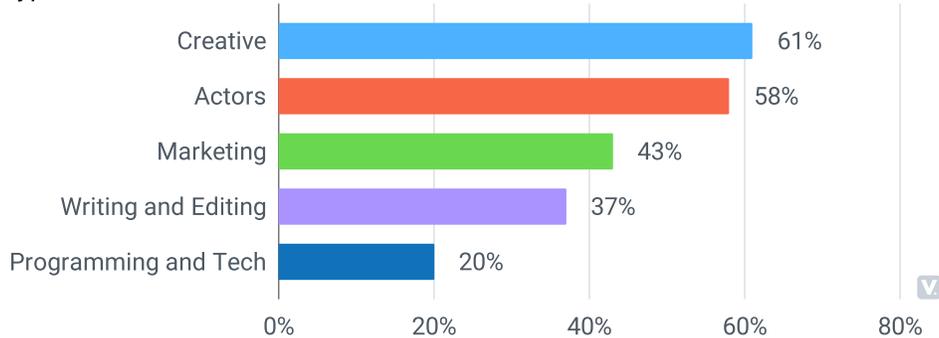
How the Number of Freelancers Businesses Worked With Changed in the Last Five Years



We saw jobs posted to the Voices.com platform grow by more than 40% year-over-year. This tells us that more people than ever are sourcing voice overs online, looking for freelancers to voice their projects. And the number of registered voice talent on our site increased by 220% year-over-year, indicating that more people than ever are looking for freelance voice work online.

The kind of freelancers people hire likely depends on the industry, but within the industries we surveyed (advertising, education, media, entertainment, technology, and more), it is the creative freelancers that are the most in-demand.

Types of Freelancers Hired in 2020



2021 Prediction for the Future of Work:

Remote work is here to stay. While some companies—like Twitter, Square, and Zillow—have announced a permanent shift to remote work and many are going ‘digital by default,’ other companies will offer flexible working terms to their employees, allowing them to access the office or work remotely. That shift in mindset, for start-up entrepreneurs through to corporate executives, is one that will impact other business decisions, like when to outsource creative work.

As companies orient themselves around their new normal, they’ll lean on freelancers for tasks that may not be in the skillset of their employees. Audio engineers, graphic designers, and, of course, voice actors will be in high demand. We expect to see companies relying on creative freelancers as their teams become leaner and brands compete for attention in the digital economy.

02

Increased Demand for eLearning and Training Content

With schools, training programs, and almost all types of learning being done remotely in 2020, one would expect to see an increase in the production of educational content. However, the volume of educational jobs on Voices.com barely moved in 2020 compared to 2019.

That doesn't mean that the demand isn't there. In fact, 33% of survey respondents cited an increased demand for eLearning content and online training as one of the most important trends affecting their company or industry.



Our survey respondents spoke to this trend:

"We did not typically have a focus on eLearning courses, but now since learning is moving online that has become a priority."

"COVID has increased our sales by large margins, required us to think of new and different ways to solve problems, develop a remote work policy, and it has made eLearning more important than ever."

"[We've received] more opportunities due to the relevant nature of our training material, but businesses are less likely to purchase and make decisions."

So if there is a demand for eLearning and training content, why haven't we seen an increase in production? It may be that, for many, 2020 was a year of getting by with the resources at hand. In many circumstances the teachers themselves became on-air talent, recording videos for their students. With the pandemic hitting mid-year, 2020 budgets were already set so it's reasonable to suggest that there was no budget to invest in elevating the quality of training content or reimagining how a curriculum would be delivered.

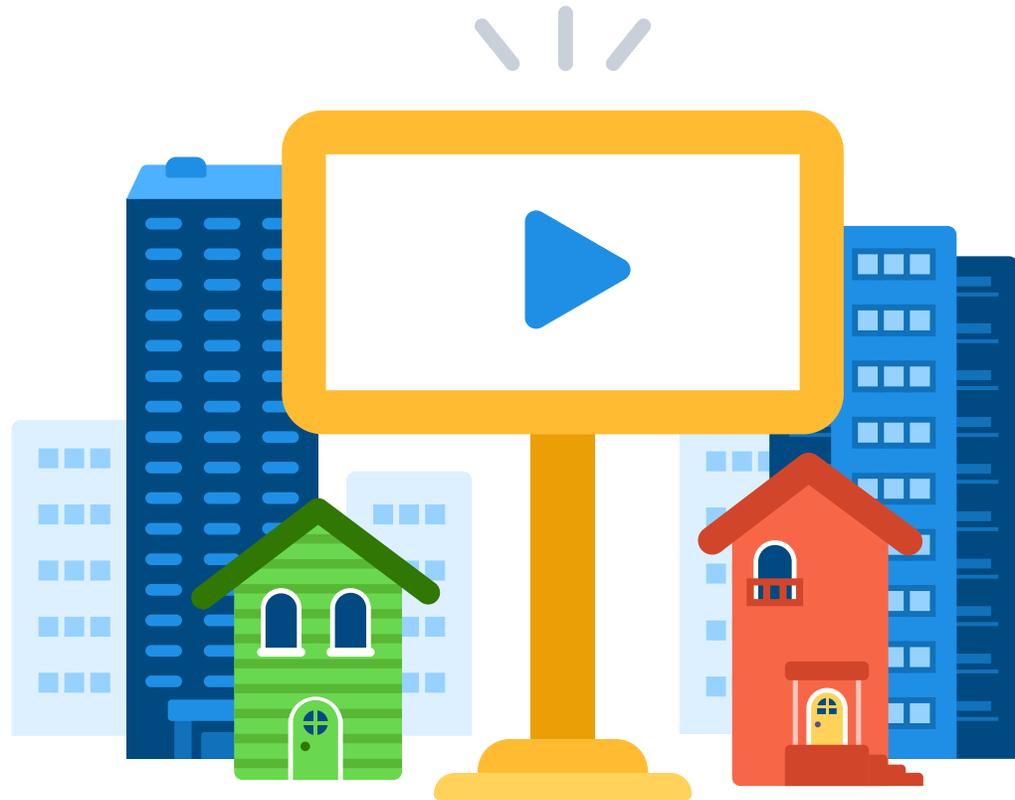
2021 Prediction for eLearning and Training Content:

Educators will be looking for professional-quality content for their students, and companies will be reimagining their internal training programs with a newly remote workforce.

We'll see content producers meeting this demand by creating eLearning and training content in droves in 2021. The eLearning industry will be full of innovation, creating new ways to provide virtual classrooms and to keep the attention of their learners.

Corporate learning and development programs will also be challenged to elevate their game. First, curriculum designers will need to re-evaluate their curricula to ensure that it translates into an increasingly digital world. Improvements to these programs may require eliminating group activities and replacing them with more pre-work, such as watching videos of pre-recorded content. However it evolves, we predict that employees will expect their employers to improve the quality of their content to be on-par with what they are viewing on YouTube.

Corporate training departments will also increasingly supplement their company-specific content with general skill development available on eLearning platforms such as LinkedIn Learning, Teachables, Udemy, Khan Academy, and even TedX.



03

Adoption of a More Flexible Content Strategy, With an Increase in Internet Videos

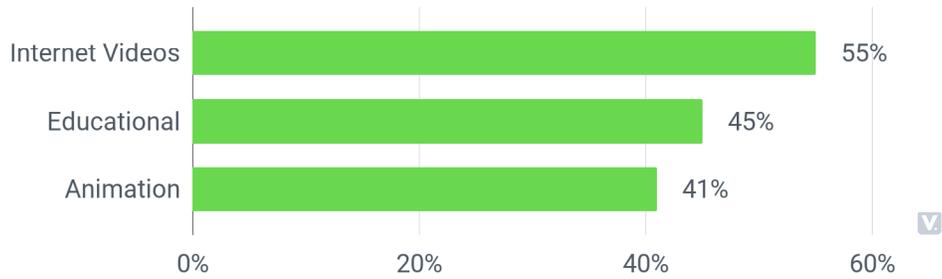
At the onset of the pandemic, many brands had already made media purchase commitments and had to retool their messaging for those commitments with a common refrain of “we’re here for you” and “we’re all in this together.” They also had to be flexible with the product launches, events, and promotional campaigns that were scheduled throughout the year. Content strategies that were in place were forced to be reimagined.

The best content plans follow consumer behavior, and that behavior made some major shifts in 2020. [Ecommerce tripled](#) when people were first sheltering in place due to the pandemic. Many people are now working from home, and

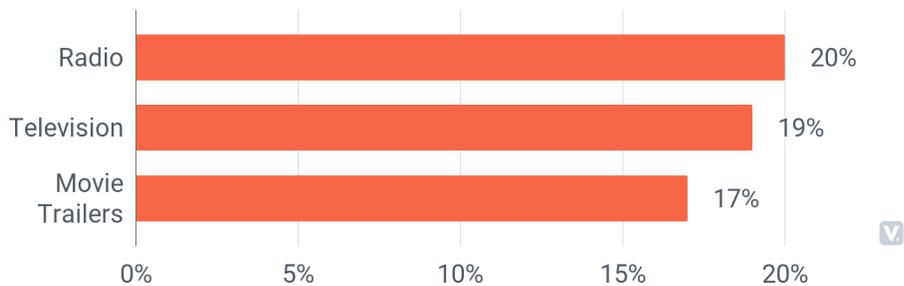
their shopping habits followed suit with [96% of Americans shopping online](#) and with [more than half of internet users ordering groceries online](#). Even [nearly half of all Baby Boomers](#) have increased their digital spending. Advertising agencies, marketers, and brands are tasked with reaching audiences who are no longer commuting or travelling and instead have to be reached at home.

Survey respondents let us know what types of projects they increased working on and which ones decreased in 2020.

The Top 3 Projects on the Rise According to Survey Respondents

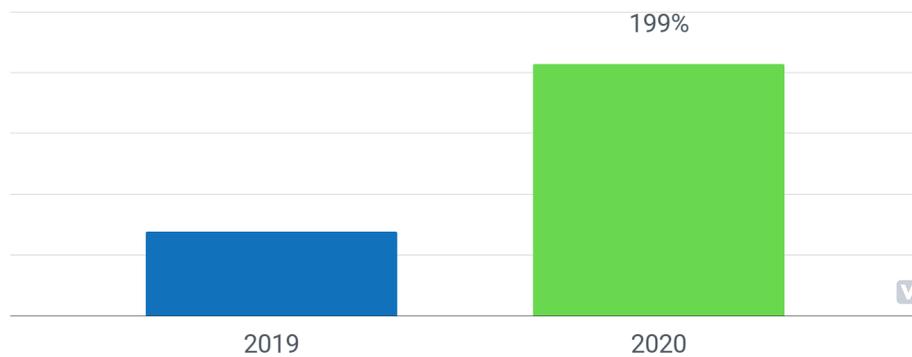


The Top 3 Projects on the Decline According to Survey Respondents



When we look at the types of jobs posted on Voices.com, the category growth generally lines up with these survey responses. While we saw growth in almost every category of work in 2020, internet videos were the real star.

Internet Video Jobs on Voices.com Increased by 199% Year Over Year



Note: Internet videos range from YouTube explainer videos, YouTube ads, Instagram Stories and Reels, Facebook Stories, and Snapchat Stories.

This demonstrates the power of consumer behavior. As screen time increased, so too did the production of video content.

Companies are adapting their content strategies to reach and acquire new customers. Customer growth is top of mind, with 69% of respondents indicating that “New Customer Growth” is their overall marketing goal going into 2021.

“We had to change the entire company's goals and visions in order to survive.”

“People seem to need video more than ever to take the place of live events and to help educate customers on how to use their products remotely. We've seen our sales increase because video is helping to fill the void.”

“From a marketing perspective, we have shifted our communications to ensure we are connecting with consumers in a meaningful and authentic way. We have also shifted our plan to the channels, networks, and content consumers have moved to. One example is a greater focus on the e-commerce channel.”

“Everything is virtual, online, and this requires even more from our storytelling/media team.”

2021 Prediction for Content Strategies:

The overall growth in jobs on Voices.com in 2020 can largely be attributed to Internet videos. With a massive increase of Internet video jobs on Voices.com by 199% over the previous year, it clearly shows the impact of people staying at home and watching more videos, to be entertained yes, but also to learn and stay informed. Consequently, marketers are responding by adapting their content strategies to include more video than ever before.

The biggest question is if these changes are sticking around, and we predict that they are. 73% of respondents believe that the changes they've made to their marketing strategy because of the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to be permanent. In 2021, we'll see growth in all types of digital content and a decline in content that hinges on its audiences to listen on their commute (like radio), be experienced in large groups (like movie theaters or museum exhibits) or to discover out in the world (like live events).



04

The Acceleration of Digital Solutions in a Voice-First World

Along with the 38% of survey respondents that indicated that they implemented new technology this year, a common theme found in the survey responses was the acceleration of digital transformation, which is defined as the digital evolution of business processes, business models, and organizational culture.

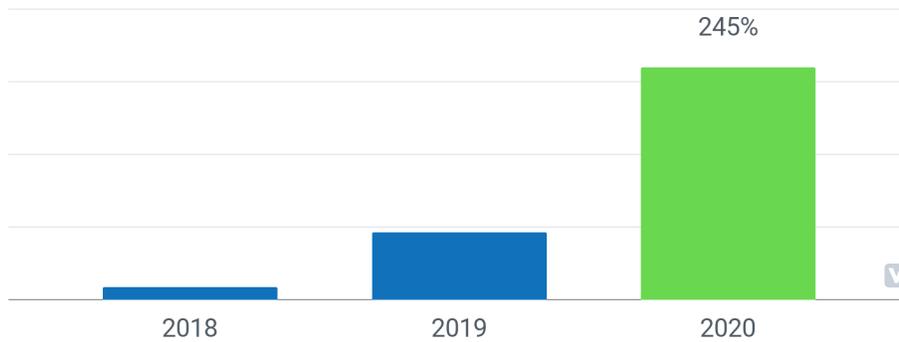
"The live event portion of our business is 100% remote through web platforms."

"Many companies have accelerated their transition to digital marketing/trying new digital marketing tools, innovations."

"COVID has forced us to accelerate our technology transitions and challenged our mindsets about things like remote work. This has been a very good thing for our business. We are now doing things that we thought would take years or a decade to transition to."

This digital transformation extends to voice technology as well. Our voice assistant job category grew by 245% year-over-year. This category of work includes voice over for voice assistants, Alexa Skills, Alexa Flash Briefings, and more.

Voice Assistant Jobs on Voices.com Grew by 245% Year Over Year



While the growth in the overall number of Alexa Skills being produced worldwide has actually been slowing down, the growth in voice assistant jobs on Voices.com suggests that creatives are finding new ways to incorporate voice assistants into their work.

2021 Prediction for Voice Technology:

As the world becomes increasingly touchless, voice technology will be adopted at a faster rate than ever before. Businesses required to follow new health and safety policies will explore touchless technological solutions as they serve customers in a socially-distanced world. This goes beyond the use of voice assistants to also include integration of text-to-speech technology and AI at various times throughout the day, all powered by a hybrid of human and synthetic voices.

Companies have become more comfortable with digital innovation and adoption in 2020, and as long as they see results, they will continue to invest in that transformation.

Looking Ahead

It's impossible to talk about marketing, advertising, and media trends from 2020 without acknowledging the fundamental—and worldwide—changes that the COVID-19 pandemic brought with it. These changes condensed five years of digital transformation and workplace reform into five months.

Two of the biggest changes we've seen is the shift to digital projects and the continued increase in voice technology. As these channels continue to grow, it will be interesting to witness the innovation that will take place to compete in these increasingly saturated markets. For years we've been declaring that we're in the era of the voice, but 2021 may just be the year that the rest of the world declares it too.

This shift to digital content also allows for targeting and personalization like never before. Marketing and advertising campaigns will have to consider multiple audiences, and creatives will be tasked with knowing each audience like the back of their hand. Brands may not have to pivot to the scale of 2020, but their renewed focus and altered strategies will serve them well with whatever 2021 brings.

Methodology

Voices deployed a qualitative survey targeting registered client users of Voices.com, ranging in industries from advertising, broadcast media, entertainment, film, education, and training. The survey looked to understand current market trends and how the landscape of creative services industries has changed over the last year.

1,002 survey respondents answered the survey that consisted of 27 multiple choice questions and 12 open-text questions. 386 respondents completed the survey in full. The survey opened on October 2, 2020 and closed on October 20, 2020. There was an incentive of the chance to win one \$200 Amazon gift card for the completion of the survey.

About Voices.com

With over one million members, Voices.com is the largest marketplace for audio and voice over products and services in the world. Since 2005, the biggest and most beloved brands have entrusted Voices.com to help them find their voice. Headquartered in London, Canada, Voices.com helps service clients and voice talent in over 160 countries.